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*Early Chinese notices of East African territories.*—By  
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New York City.

THE earliest accounts in Chinese literature of Western territories contain no allusions of any kind that we might interpret as referring to any part of the African Continent. The name Li-kan, or Li-kién, which occurs in Ssü-ma Ts'ién's *Shü-ki* (about 86 B. C.) is there coupled with that of T'iau-chü (Chaldaeae), and since in records that date from a few generations later the term is persistently declared to be identical with that of Ta-ts'in, the Roman empire in its eastern provinces, I do not hesitate to look upon it as covering the Roman Orient, possibly including Egypt. This is also the case with the accounts of Ta-ts'in contained in the *Hôu-han-shu*,—applying mainly to the first century A. D.,—in which the direction of the silk trade via Antiochia Margiana, Ktesiphon, Hira and, by the periplus of the Arabian peninsula, to the silk-buying factories of the Phœnician coast, such as Tyre, Sidon and Berytos, is clearly indicated.<sup>1</sup> Yet no mention of African ports can be traced back earlier than the beginning of the third century A. D., when fresh information, though transmitted unfortunately in sorely disfigured texts, had reached China. I refer to the account of the *Weï-lió*,<sup>2</sup> where the city of Alexandria is manifestly meant by the name Wu-ch'i-san. I admit that the *Weï-lió* is not very clear in its details regarding the dependencies of Ta-ts'in; but the one passage I refer to leaves but little doubt that Wu-ch'i-san is Alexandria. It says: "At the city of Wu-ch'i-san, you travel by river on board ship one day, then make a round at sea, and after six days'

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<sup>1</sup> For texts and translations see my *China and the Roman Orient*, Shanghai, 1885, *passim*.

<sup>2</sup> An historical work referring to one of the so-called "Three Kingdoms," the state of Weï (535 to 557 A. D.) and compiled between 239 and 265 A. D. See Chavannes, "Les pays d'occident d'après le Weï-lió" in *T'oung-pao*, Série ii, Vol. vi, No. 5, pp. 519, seq.

passage on the great sea, arrive in this country [Tats'in, or its capital Antioch].” This, I hold, describes the journey from Alexandria to Antioch. The first character of the Chinese transcription, *wu* (black), may stand for *o* and *u* in the rendering of Indian sounds;<sup>1</sup> and it also represents the vocalic element of the first syllable (*a*, *o* or *e*) in the several west-Asiatic forms for “ebony,” such as Persian *abnus*, in their Chinese equivalent *wu-man-tzī*.<sup>2</sup> The second character *ch'i* (slow) stands for *di*,<sup>3</sup> and the three characters may be said to stand for *adisan* or *odisan*, thus furnishing a still recognizable distortion of the name *Alexandria*. Unfortunately Chinese texts have preserved nothing beyond that name, assuming our interpretation of its transcription is at all correct.

In point of age the next mention in Chinese literature of an African territory is an account applying probably to the beginning of the T'ang dynasty. It occurs in a text devoted to the Ta-shī, i. e., the Arabs of the Khalif empire, in the *T'ang-shu* (chap. 221<sup>B</sup>, p. 19), in a passage describing the extent of the Ta-shī dominions, “in the east of which there are the T'u-k'i-shī,” i. e. the Türgäsh of the Old-Turkish stone inscriptions, the “south-west being connected with the sea.” The Türgäsh being mentioned as the Eastern neighbors of the Ta-shī seems to indicate that the account belongs to the early part of the eighth century. It reads as follows:

“In the south-west [of the Ta-shī, or Arabs] is the sea and in the sea there are the tribes of *Po-pa-li* [in Cantonese and old Chinese *Put-pat-lik*, which I look upon as a transcription of *Barbarik*]. These do not belong to any country, grow no grain, but live on meat and drink a mixture of milk and cow's blood; they wear no clothes, but cover their body with sheep-

<sup>1</sup> St. Julien, *Méthode pour déchiffrer et transcrire les noms Sanscrits*, etc., Nos. 1313 and 1314.

<sup>2</sup> See my “Aus der Ethnographie des Tschau Ju-kua” in *Stzb. der philos. Klasse der K. bayer. Akad. d. Wiss.*, 1898, III p. 491, note 3.

<sup>3</sup> Julien, op. cit., p. 204 No. 1876; cf. Schlegel, “The Secret of the Chinese Method of Transcribing Foreign Sounds” in *T'oung-pao*, II, Vol. i, p. 249, who says it is pronounced *ti* at Amoy.

<sup>4</sup> See my paper “Chinese equivalents of the letter R in foreign names” in *Journ. of the China Branch, R. A. S.*, Vol. xxi (1886), p. 219. As there shown, final *t* in old Chinese stands for final *r*; *l* stands for *r*; and *t* before *l* (or *r*) becomes *l* (or *r*) by assimilation (see Schlegel in *T'oung-pao*, 1900, p. 109).

skins. Their women are intelligent and graceful. The country produces great quantities of ivory and of the incense *o-mo* [in Cantonese *o-mut* = *omur*, standing for Persian *ambar*, i. e. ambergris].”

“When the traveling merchants of Po-ssī (Persia) wish to go there for trade, they must go in parties of several thousand men, and having offered cloth cuttings and sworn a solemn oath (lit. “a blood oath”) will proceed to trade.”

Another account written generations before the *T'ang-shu*, the work of Óu-yang Siu completed in 1060 A. D., occurs in the *Yu-yang-tsa-tsu* by Tuan Ch'ōng-shī, who died in 863 A. D. The transcription here used is identical with that of the *T'ang-shu*, viz: *Po-pa-li* (*Put-pat-lik* = Barbarik). Tuan Ch'ōng-shī says (chap. 4, p. 3<sup>B</sup> seq.):

“The country of Po-pa-li is in the south-western sea. The people do not know how to grow grain and live on meat only. They are in the habit of sticking needles into the veins of cattle, thus drawing blood, which they drink raw, on having it mixed with milk. They wear no clothes, but cover their loins with sheep-skins. Their women are clean, white and upright. The inhabitants make their own countrymen prisoners, whom they sell to the foreign merchants at prices several times [more than what they would fetch at home]. The country produces only elephants' teeth and *a-mo* [ambergris]. If the Persian merchants wish to go to this county they form parties of several thousand men and make gifts of strips of cloth, and then everyone of them, including the very oldest men and tender youths, have to draw their blood wherewith to swear an oath, before they can dispose of their goods. From olden times they were not subject to any foreign country. In fighting they use elephants' teeth and ribs and the horns of wild oxen made into halberds, and they wear armour and have bows and arrows. They have 200,000 foot soldiers. The Ta-shī (Arabs) make constant raids upon them.”

My identification of these two short accounts, which appear to be derived from a common source earlier than the year 863, is based chiefly on the great similarity which the Chinese transcription bears to the name of Berbera, the city and country on the east coast south of Abyssinia, and on the mention of ivory and ambergris as the chief products. Ambergris was as a matter of fact exported from the coast

of Berbera.<sup>1</sup> The identification is, however, further supported by a later account of the same country in the *Chu-fan-chi* of Chau Ju-kua, who describes it under the name *Pi-pa-lo*, in Cantonese: *Pat-pa-lo*, which is another intelligible transcription of the foreign sound *Barbara*.

Chau ju-kua<sup>2</sup> describes the country as follows:

"The country of Pi-pa-lo contains four *chou* (cities), the remaining places being villages rivalling each other in influence and might. The people worship heaven, they do not worship Buddha. The country produces many camels and sheep, and the ordinary food of the people consists of camels' flesh, milk and baked cakes. The country has ambergris [*lung-hiën*, lit. "Dragon's Spittle," the standard word for ambergris, see Giles, No. 4508], big elephants' tusks and big rhinoceros horns. There are elephants' tusks which weigh over a hundred catties and rhinoceros horns of ten catties and more. There is also much putchuck, liquid storax, myrrh, and tortoise-shell of great thickness, for which there is great demand in other countries. Among the products there is further the "camel crane" [*lo-t'o-hau*, i. e., the ostrich]. It measures from the ground to the top of its head six or seven feet. It has wings and can fly, but not to any great height. There is an animal called

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<sup>1</sup> See Heyd, *Histoire du commerce du levant au moyen-âge*, ed. Furcy Raynaud, Leipzig, 1886, Vol. ii, pp. 571—574. The best quality is found on the coast of Berbera and Zinj (Renaudot, *Ancient accounts of India and China*, London, 1733, p. 64).

<sup>2</sup> Regarding this author see my papers "Die Länder des Islam nach chinesischen Quellen", *T'oung-pao*, Supplément, Vol. v, Leiden 1894, p. 12 seqq., and "Chao Ju-kua, a new source of mediaeval geography" in *Journal, R. A. S.*, 1896, p. 57 seqq. Chau Ju-kua probably wrote at the time of the last Abbaside caliph Mustasim (1242 to 1258 A. D.), since in his description of Bagdad ("Die Länder des Islam," etc., p. 41) he describes its king as a linear descendant of Mohammed the Prophet, and adds that the throne was handed down to his own times through twenty-two generations. If we look upon Cossai as the genealogical head of the several generations the sixth of which saw the prophet himself, the twenty-second was that of the caliph Mustasim. The latest date mentioned in Chau Ju-kua's work is 1178 A. D. In the *Ling-wai-tai-ta* by Chóu K'ü-fei, published in 1178, which goes over the same field as the *Chu-fan-chi* and from which about one-third of the matter placed on record by Chau Ju-kua has been copied (see K. Tsuboi, "Cheu Ch'üfe's Aufzeichnungen," etc., in *Actes, XII<sup>e</sup> Congrès Intern. des Orientalistes*, Rome, 1899, Vol. ii, pp. 69-125), no mention is made of Pi-pa-lo.

*tsu-la* [in Cantonese: *tso-lap*, a transcription of Arabic *zarafa*, the giraffe]. It resembles a camel in shape, an oxen in size, and it is of a yellow colour. Its front legs are five feet long, its hind legs only three feet. Its head is high up and turns upwards. Its skin is an inch thick. There is also a mule with brown, white and black stripes around its body. These animals wander about the mountain wilds; they are a variety of the camel. The people of the country are great huntsmen and hunt these animals with poisoned arrows."

Mr. W. W. Rockhill, who has collaborated with me in the publication of my translation of Chau Ju-kua's ethnographical sketches, holds that the "four cities" referred to are Berbera, the Malao of the Periplus, and Zeyla, the mart of the Aualites of the Periplus to the west of it; and to the east of Berbera, Mehet or Mait, the Moundon of the Greeks, and Lasgori or Gueselee, the Mosullon of the Greeks. He refers to Ibn Batuta (II, 180), who says of Zeyla that it was an important city, but extremely dirty and bad-smelling on account of the custom of the people of killing camels in the streets. He also notes that the sheep of this country are famous for their fat. At Mukdashau, our Magadoxo or Mugdishu, he says, they killed several hundred camels a day for food. In the first century A. D. the Periplus mentions myrrh, a little frankincense, tin, ivory, tortoise-shell, odoriferous gums and cinnamon among the exports of the Berbera coast.

The Chinese name "camel-crane" is a translation of the Persian name of the ostrich, *shutur-murgh*, meaning "camel-bird" (Bretschneider, *Mediaeval Researches*, London 1888, Vol. i, p. 144, note 392). Chóu K'ü-fei refers to the "camel-crane" in similar terms in his account of the Zinj tribes, but he adds that it eats all possible things, even blazing fire or red-hot copper or iron. In other words he justifies its wellknown characteristic, which is conveyed in the popular adage the "stomach of an ostrich." The Chinese author speaking of the camel as the animal from which the "striped mule" is descended would seem strange, if we did not assume that his remark on that point refers to the three animals, the ostrich, the giraffe and the mule. It certainly holds good for the giraffe, which, as Mr. Rockhill points out, was held by some to be a variety of camel, e. g. by Mas'udi (*Prairies d'or*, III 3). Mr. Rockhill has the following note regarding the striped mule of Pi-pa-lo: "This, I suppose,

is the same animal as the *hua-fu-lu*, or "spotted *fu-lu*," of the *Ming-shi*, 326. Bretschneider (*Ancient Chinese and Arabs*, 21 note 7) says that "the *hua fu-lu* is probably the *Hippotigris Burchellii*, or Douw, the *Tiger-horse* of the ancients, which was brought several times to Rome from Africa. It inhabits the deserts of Eastern Africa, between the equator and the tenth degree of northern latitude, whilst the two other species of this genus of the horse family, the *Zebra* and the *Quagga*, are to be met with only in Southern Africa." Mr. Rockhill refers to Barbosa, who says that the people of Magadoxo "use herbs with their arrows."

There can be but little doubt that the Chinese account of Pi-pa-lo refers to Berbera, and this involves a broad hint as to the identification of another sketch of Chau Ju-kua's which is found in the *Chu-fan-chi* under the designation *Chung-li*. It reads as follows:

"The people of the country of Chung-li go bareheaded and barefooted; they wrap themselves about with cotton stuffs, for they dare not wear jackets, since wearing jackets and turbans is a privilege reserved for the ministers and courtiers of the king. The king lives in a brick house covered with glazed tiles, the people live in huts of palm-leaves thatched with grass. Their daily food consists in baked flour-cakes, sheep's and camel's milk. There are great numbers of cattle, sheep and camels."

"Among the countries of the Ta-shi (Arabs) this is the only one which produces frankincense."

"There are many sorcerers among them, who are able to change themselves into birds, beasts or fish and by these means keep the ignorant people in a state of terror. If some one of them while trading with a foreign ship has a quarrel, the sorcerers cast a charm over the ship, so that it can neither go forward or backward, and they only release the ship when the dispute has been settled. The government has formally forbidden this practice."

"Every year countless numbers of birds of passage alight on the desert parts of the country. When the sun rises they suddenly vanish so that one cannot find a trace of them. The people catch them with nets and eat them; they are remarkably savoury. They are in season till the end of spring, but as

soon as summer comes they disappear to return the following year."

"When one of the people dies and they are about to put him in his coffin, his kinsfolks from near and far come to condole. Each person flourishing a sword in his hand, goes in and asks the mourners the cause of the person's death. 'If he was killed by someone', each one says, 'we will revenge him on the murderer with these swords.' Should the mourners reply that he was not murdered, but came to his end by the will of heaven, they throw away their swords and break into violent wailing."

"Every year there are driven on the coast a great many dead fish measuring as much as twenty *ch'ang* in length, and two *ch'ang* through the body. The people do not eat the flesh of these fish, but cut out their brains, marrow and eyes, from which they get oil, often as much as three hundred *töng*. They mix this oil with lime to caulk their ships, and use it also in lamps. The poor people use the ribs of these fish as rafters, the back-bones as door-leaves and they cut off the vertebrae to make mortars with."

"There is a *shan* [hill, range of hills, island, promontory, or high coast] in this country which forms the boundary of Pi-pa-lo [Berbera]. It is 4,000 *li* in circumference; for the most part it is uninhabited. Dragon's blood is obtained from this *shan* [hill, island, etc.], also aloes, and from the waters, tortoise-shell and ambergris [*lung-hiën*, lit. Dragon's Spittle]."

"It is not known whence ambergris comes; it suddenly appears in lumps of from three to five catties, driven on the shore by the wind. The people of the country make haste to divide it up, lest ships run across it at sea and fish it up."

The essential point in the identification of this country of Chung-li is the mention of a *shan*, which may mean "a range of hills," at the boundary of Pi-pa-lo (Berbera). This port, well-known to the Arabs of the thirteenth century, was indeed separated from the adjoining high plateau by a range of hills, the natural boundary between the territory of Berbera and Somaliland. The extent of the *shan*, in this case "a plateau," being stated to be 4,000 *li*, would point to a large tract of land. I would not lay too much stress on the name Chung-li;



but final *ng* has been used to transcribe final *m* (see Julien, *Méthode*, etc., Nos. 485 and 486: *kang* for Sanscrit *kam* and *gham*); *chung*, middle, is pronounced *tsung* at Shanghai, and *ts* is quite commonly interchanged with initial *s*, e. g. in the title *sengün*, "a general," of the Old-Turkish stone inscriptions, which stands for Chinese *tsiang-kün*. Chung-li may thus possibly be a transcription of the sound *Somali* or *Somal*. Another important characteristic is the remark that this country is the only one among the Ta-shī, or Arab, territories which produces frankincense. This, even if we admit the coast of Hadramaut to have participated in this industry, is a broad hint as to its identification with Somaliland<sup>1</sup>.

Mr. Rockhill is of the opinion that the island of Socotra corresponds to Chau Ju-kua's Chung-li, and in support of this view he quotes a number of interesting parallels from mediaeval authors. Thus the aloe, mentioned as one of the products of Chung-li, is referred to by Mas'udi (III, 37), who calls it *socotri* from the name of the island; Marco Polo (II, 398-399, Yule, 2nd ed.) says of its people, "they have a great deal of ambergris," and he relates the almost identical story told by Chau Ju-kua more than a century before him in connection with his Chung-li. He says (p. 399): "And you must know that in this Island there are the best enchanterers in the world. It is true that their Archbishop forbids the practise to the best of his ability, but 'tis all to no purpose, for they insist that their forefathers followed it, and so must they also. I will give you a sample of their enchantments. Thus, if a ship be sailing past with a fair wind and a strong, they will raise a contrary wind and compel her to turn back. In fact they make the wind blow as they list and produce great tempests and disasters; and other such sorceries they perform, which

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<sup>1</sup> F. A. Flückiger, *Pharmakognosie des Pflanzenreiches*, 3rd. ed., Berlin 1891, p. 45 seqq.: "Die Bäume, welche den Weihrauch liefern, wachsen im Lande der Somalistämme, im äußersten Osten Afrikas, sowie auch auf den jenseits liegenden südostarabischen Küstenstrichen Hadramaut, Schehr und Mahrah." "Der meiste und geschätzteste Weihrauch wird im nord-östlichen Somalilande gesammelt." "In Arabien eingeführter oder dort gesammelter Weihrauch nimmt auch die Namen arabischer Landschaften an, z. B. Schehr, Morbat, Dhofar." In a special chapter on frankincense Chau Ju-kua mentions just these three places as producers of the drug.

it will be better to say nothing about in our Book." Chau Ju-kua is less discreet, when he informs us that the sorcerers of Chung-li changed themselves into birds or fish, in order to terrorize the population. According to him "the Government has forbidden such practices." This applies in Socotra to the "Archbishop,"—in reality as late as 1281 a bishop ordained by the Nestorian patriarch of Bagdad (Assemani, *Bibl. Orient.* IV, p. 780). Rockhill quotes two other stories of sorcerers, one from Purchas' Pilgrims (IX, 254), who quotes Friar Joanno dos Santos (A. D. 1597) as describing quite a similar trick practised by a great sorcerer on the isle of Zanzibar, and another, mentioned by Ibn Batuta (IV, 227), of sorcerers on an island in the eastern part of the Indian Ocean, who "raised storms by enchantment when vessels did not pay the customary tribute."

Taking into account the parallels to which Mr. Rockhill has drawn attention, I feel tempted to accept his suggestion as regards Socotra. The translation of *shan* by "a rocky island" is certainly unobjectionable, and since nearly all that can be shown to apply to Socotra from western sources occurs in the text after the words "there is a *shan* in this country," etc., the concluding part of the chapter may be regarded as an appendix to the account of Chung-li describing this outlying island of Socotra. The *shan* being stated to measure "four thousand *li* in circumference" fairly corresponds to the ideas current among western geographers of the period, if we look upon the *li* not as the Chinese *li*, but as the thirtieth part of a parasang, or a stadium, in which sense I have shown it is to be taken in the identifications of several western Asiatic itineraries (see my *China and the Roman Orient*, pp. 222-225). Four thousand *li* would thus be equal to 133 parasangs. This may be an exaggerated estimate of the size of the island, but scarcely more so than the statements of Yakut (Wüstenfeld III p. 102, quoting al Hamadani) and Abulfeda (*Geogr. d'A.*, ed. Reinaud and de Slane, Paris 1840, p. 371,—kindly furnished to me by Prof. Gottheil),—who state that the length of Socotra alone was "eighty parasangs."

This part of the coast of Africa was certainly well-known and much frequented by Arab and Persian traders during the thirteenth century. Chau Ju-kua is well acquainted with its products such as frankincense, aloe, dragon's blood

and ambergris, and since all these were staple articles of the Chinese market, we may infer that direct commerce was carried on through the mediation of Arab skippers plying between Ts'üan-chóu-fu (Zaitun) and Canton in the Far East and the several ports *en route*, including those of Africa, and their Arabian homes. We need not be astonished, therefore, to find that remnants of the mediaeval intercourse between the coasts of China and Eastern Africa have actually been discovered. In April 1898 two small collections of Chinese coins were sent to me for identification, one by Dr. F. L. Stuhlmann, now at the head of the biological and agricultural Institute at Amani (East Africa), the other by Mr. Justus Strandes, both well-known African travellers. Dr. Stuhlmann wrote me that his collection of eight coins had been excavated in the neighbourhood of Mugdishu on the Somali coast together with a great many broken pieces of Chinese celadon porcelain, vitreous paste and Arabic coins; Mr. Strandes, who had purchased his collection of seven coins at the same place, wrote in similar terms. Both collections are now in the "Museum für Völkerkunde" of Berlin. The several coins were unfortunately in a bad state of preservation, but they were without exception of the Chinese type, i. e. round with a square hole and of bronze.

Those coins the legends of which I was able to identify are all dated from before the beginning of the thirteenth century, the eleventh and twelfth centuries being chiefly represented. I am, therefore, inclined to ascribe them to the very period covered by Chau Ju-kua's account of Chung-li, which, owing to the fact that the *Ling-wai-tai-ta* of 1178 contains no mention of these territories, must be placed between this date and Chau Ju-kua's time, i. e. about 1242 A. D. Chinese junks have visited Mugdishu in 1430 (see my *Ancient Porcelain*, Shanghai, 1888, p. 62 and note 155), but since no coins of the Ming Dynasty could be traced in the two small collections, unless they were among the few hopelessly disfigured unidentified specimens, I conclude that these unique traces of Chinese intercourse so far discovered had nothing to do with that later period.

Of the east coast south of Somaliland we possess short accounts of an island called *Ts'öng-pa* and of a country *K'un-lun-tsöng-ki*, both by Chau Ju-kua.

*Ts'öng-pa*, in Cantonese *Ts'ang-pat*, may be a transcription of *Zanguebar*, or *Zanzibar*.

Chau Ju-kua's text runs as follows:

"The *Ts'öng-pa* country is an island of the sea south of *Hu-ch'a-la* [Guzerat]. On the west it borders on a great mountain."

"The inhabitants are of *Ta-shi* stock and follow the religion of the *Ta-shi*. They wrap themselves in blue foreign cotton stuffs and wear red leather shoes. Their daily food consists of meal, baked cakes and mutton."

"There are many villages and wooded hills, and lines of hills rising one above the other."

"The climate is warm, and there is no cold season. The products of the land include elephants' tusks, native gold, or gold bullion, ambergris and yellow sandalwood."

"Every year *Hu-ch'a-la* [Guzerat] and the *Ta-shi* settlements along the sea-coast send ships to trade white cotton cloth, porcelain, copper and red *ki-pei* [cotton] in this country."

The chief difficulty in the explanation of this account is the mention of sandalwood among the products of the country, since it is not likely that Indian, Timorese, or far-eastern varieties were brought to this out-of-the-way part of the Indian Ocean as a market. I do not know whether the dye made of the rock-moss, or orchil, of *Zanzibar* may possibly be confounded with some dye made of sandalwood. The mistake might perhaps be accounted for in this way.

On the other hand we have unmistakeable evidence of the importation of Chinese porcelain. The late Dr. W. S. Bushell, in a review of my book on "Ancient Porcelain" (*North-China Daily News*, May 9th, 1888) has the following remarks on this point:

"Arabian writers tell us of fleets of large Chinese junks in the Persian Gulf in the eighth century, and the return voyage of Marco Polo in the suite of a Mongol Princess from *Zayton* to *Hormuz* is well-known. The "*Chu Fan-chi*," a book on foreign countries by *Chao Ju-kua*, an author of the Sung Dynasty, was published a century before the time of Marco Polo. Dr. Hirth quotes this to trace the export of porcelain even as far as the coast of *Zanzibar*, the great African mart of ivory and ambergris, which is described

under the name of Ts'eng-p'o. I may add that Sir John Kirk during his residence as Consul-General at Zanzibar, made a collection of ancient Chinese céladon porcelain, which he took to the British Museum last year. Some of it was dug up, I believe from ruins, mixed with Chinese cash of the Sung Dynasty, a striking confirmation of the Chinese writer, who was Inspector of Foreign Trade and Shipping in Fuhkien Province."